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## LOURDES: A PLACE OF THE GOSPELS

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

THERE is nothing new to say about Lourdes. The statement is not so superfluous as it seems, for in a centenary year the need is not so much to find fresh superlatives, or even to quote spectacular statistics, as to return to the simple, original fact and find its essential meaning once more. This is far from easy to do: it is as difficult indeed as it is to remember the grotto in the modern town of Lourdes. And the analogy is not inexact. What men make of the marvellous can reflect all their cupidity and stupidity, too. We should not under-estimate the effect of the horrors that surround Lourdes on those who may be anxious to discern its truth but are baffled by its setting—in the written record as well as in the piety stalls and the hotels. And the bluff apologetic of the hearty publicists—‘I really *like* all those shops’—is far from reassuring.

Ultimately it matters not at all, of course. The Holy Places of Palestine have, through the centuries, provided just the same trials for those who genuinely want to reach the essential *thing*. And for that matter the whole human history of the Church reflects the cardinal distinction between what is of God and what men’s imagination, passion or mere torpor, can make it sometimes seem. In Lourdes, the practice of Ignatian composition of place is of first importance. And the place to begin with is not in Lourdes at all. It is the village of Bartrès, three miles away, where Bernadette spent much of her childhood as a maid-of-all-work, as the half-adopted child of Madame Laguës. Here there is still the sense of a pastoral fitness of things that lies close to the meaning of the apparitions and to Bernadette’s part in them. It is strange, and most welcome, that in this village little is altered, and the parish church, with its gilded retable of the Baptism of Christ, and the farm where Bernadette lived, still recall an ordered, undemonstrative way of living that is a whole continent away from the tumult of the town nearby. By an exact instinct, Bartrès has been the happy inspiration of the new *Cité de St Pierre*, the admirable centre for poor pilgrims set up by the *Secours Catholique*, where simple chalets house those who cannot pay for hotels. And the

chapel is a copy of the stone barn of Bartrès, where Bernadette must often have prayed: a decent building, rooted in the earth, which seems a faithful symbol of Bernadette herself, who remained a sturdy woman of that place and time—obstinate, perhaps, but deeply devoted to the honest allegiance of her people and her land.

The second place that matters, in a reconstruction of what Lourdes should really mean, is the *Cachot*, the local lock-up where the Soubirous family was living in 1858. It was from this single, dark cell of a room that Bernadette set out for each of her eighteen visits to the grotto of Massabielle. Here her somewhat feckless father had brought his family: it was the mark of the utter poverty to which they were reduced. And still it declares, without qualification, the fact of the family's destitution. Too easily 'poverty' can seem the generality of pious legend: at the *Cachot* it is seen as hard, and yet as holy. For the Soubirous were evidently not crushed by their material misfortune: the intense self-respect of the poor is revealed in Bernadette's anger when any visitor attempted, once the *Cachot* became a place for the curious to visit, to leave some gift or other. This is not the detachment of holiness, merely: it is the instinctive reaction of a girl who resents patronage. The *Cachot* was the poorest hovel in Lourdes, no doubt: but it was a home, it had its holiness, it must not be invaded.

Finally, of course, there is the grotto itself. At the time of the apparitions, all was peaceful here—simply the river running by, and the shallow cave with its lichen and leaves. Thanks to the foresight of Mgr Laurence, who was Bishop of Tarbes at the time, all this area was bought by the Church authorities, and essentially it remains unchanged. The obvious thing to have done, in obedience to our Lady's request that a chapel should be built, was to enclose the grotto (rather in the way the Portiuncula is enclosed in the church of our Lady of the Angels at Assisi). Happily, the grotto was left as it was, open to the sky, and the series of churches was built above the cave (and now, finally, the enormous basilica of St Pius X has been built below ground, so completing a remarkable anthology of architectural ingenuity.) The grotto has of recent years been restored, as far as possible, to its original simplicity. The ornate altar has been removed, and the rather gruesome collection of crutches and splints has been discreetly taken away. It is a place where the elements of the message

of Lourdes are still plainly revealed: prayer (and that never ceases) and penance (which the presence of the sick pilgrims evokes so profoundly).

These places—Bartrès, the *Cachot* and the grotto itself—are the visible signs of the evangelical simplicity of our Lady's message at Lourdes. And it is a sad misunderstanding that even the miracles of bodily healing should be seen outside that context. In the Gospels, our Lord's miracles are *signs*: given in confirmation of his divine mission, of themselves only of meaning as the stupendous proof of God's mercy. At Lourdes, indeed, this is most plain. For the invocations for the sick, which recall so movingly the very circumstances of the Gospels, are always qualified by the essential prayer, 'Thy will be done'. And it has frequently been insisted that the great procession of the Blessed Sacrament each afternoon, which has in fact been the occasion of some of the most remarkable miracles, is a perfect illustration of our Lady's office in leading men to her Son. The work of divine mercy is wholly his, and the providence of her apparitions at Lourdes has been to bring men back to what is fundamental: to the prayer and penance that are the only means for man's reconciliation to God.

The fidelity of Bernadette to the rôle in which, so improbably, she was cast, is itself a supreme example of evangelical innocence. One uses the word advisedly, for 'innocence' alone can explain so complete an acceptance of a mission so strange. The 'messages' are the simplest statements—re-statements rather—of cardinal Christian truth. And that can mean a violent assault to the calculated prudence into which even traditional religious truth can develop. It needed, one may suppose, this extraordinarily strong and simple child—who was at the same time a rather stupid child by the standards of usual wit—to reassert the '*nisi efficiamini*', the indispensable child's trust and generosity, which is always to be our response to the huge demands of divine grace. The very symbols of Lourdes—the gestures of abasement and obedience—are certainly folly to the worldly wise. But they are profoundly evocative of the true depth of the response of faith. The water that springs from a rock: how immediately it speaks of Yahweh's work of refreshment in the desert, and, even more wonderfully, of the 'living waters' of which our Lord spoke at Jacob's well. And the strange incident of Bernadette's eating the grass (sometimes an embarrassment to the more literal of the pious commen-

tators) is a figure of that utter obedience, in terms of a radical need of the creature, to which Christ calls all those who would follow him. There is, too, the revealing instruction which Bernadette received from our Lady in making the sign of the cross. It was a lesson she never forgot, and years afterwards she would make that large, slow, defined movement which recalled so graphically the redemptive fact from which all these marvels sprang. But it is not a vague call to prayer, unspecified and interior merely, which our Lady commits to Bernadette. 'Tell the priests to build a chapel here.' 'Let people come in procession.' God is to be worshipped: sacrifice is to be offered, not only in the hidden intentions of the heart but in the one salvific sacrifice of the Mass. Lourdes means the whole work of man's return to God: in personal prayer and mortification, certainly, but no less actively related to his social function as the member of the Mystical Body of Christ.

It is the sick who are the guarantors of the real truth of Lourdes. 'A cruel deception', says the not unsympathetic Protestant witness, as he contemplates the vast army of the blind, the lame, the paralysed, those in the last stages of cancer, of whom only a tiny minority can hope for visible healing. No remark could be a more complete misconception of what Lourdes is meant to be. Anyone who knows the hospitals of Lourdes will find there, most of all, the secret of the holiness of this place. Suffering that is accepted in union with the passion of Christ, in union with its motive and its meaning, is the perfect exemplar of our Lady's message to Bernadette: 'Penance!' 'Pray for sinners!' It is in this sense that von Hügel speaks of suffering as 'the highest, purest, perhaps the only pure form of human *action*' (in a letter to Mrs Drew). It is not a negative acceptance but a positive *action*, and the vast chorus of the prayers of the sick is the tremendous assertion of faith at its noblest: disinterested, unconditional, free. And even those who cannot speak, who are in the very abyss of pain and bodily degradation, are most eloquent here. The hardest heart will melt, and that not because of emotion or the stress of great ceremony (these pass soon enough) but because at Lourdes the sick are confronted with the naked demands of faith, and their response is for the healing of us all.

There is no need to insist on the continuing importance of Lourdes in the life of the Church. The forms of pilgrimage change, and reflect, naturally enough, the shifting currents of

custom and country. Once it was Loretto or Compostella: now it is Lourdes or Fatima. But what seems specially enduring about Lourdes is the absolute identity of its message with the words and works of the Gospels themselves. Nowhere else in the world can you feel so surely the presence of Christ and of his Mother, who now, as then, says: 'Do whatever he tells you'.



## OUR LADY AND HER ROSARY

GERALD VANN, O.P.

THOSE who accuse the Church of mariolatry would do well to study the history of mariology. Of our Lady more than of any other creature it can be truly said that she has had greatness thrust upon her; true, she foresaw it, and humbly stated it when she sang, 'Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed'; but the honour, the glory, the veneration were not of her seeking, and when they came to her it was first of all as a result of defending the truth about her Son; and as they grew and grew through the ages their effect was, as she would wish, to increase men's love and understanding of her Son; while on the other hand attempts to destroy her *cultus* and deny her greatness have ended in a denial of the divinity of her Son. She began by declaring, 'Behold the handmaid—the chattel—of the Lord'; and her words summarize not only her life and personality but the story of her *cultus* as well.

If one were to ask, for instance, whether the apostles believed in what is commonly called the Immaculate Conception—the doctrine that Mary was preserved from all taint of original sin—or thought of and revered her as Queen of Angels, the answer would presumably be, no: they had had no occasion to think of her in such terms. Obviously they held her in deep veneration as the mother of their Lord; but she was still Mary of Nazareth: she became known and revered as Queen of Heaven not suddenly and *per saltum* but as a result of a long, gradual and homogeneous development, and a development which was at first not devotional but theological.

The folly of confusing sacredness of office with personal holiness seems to be a quite recent phenomenon: many modern Catholics seem to think—in bland defiance of the facts of history—that a Pope must *ipso facto* be a saint, or, for that matter, that a man who writes 'spiritual' books must be a spiritual man. Earlier ages suffered from no such delusions; no one ever had a deeper or more vivid veneration for the papal office than Catherine of Siena, for instance, yet no one could be more outspoken and scorching in denouncing the moral shortcomings of the holders of that office. In the same way the early Christians saw no immediate connection between the immensity of Mary's vocation and her own personal glory: in what is sometimes called the 'official' Gospel—that of Christ's ministry, from baptism to ascension—Mary is not specially exalted; on the contrary, when she and her relatives come to claim our Lord's attention he seems to ignore her; St Paul in Galatians speaks of the incarnate Word simply as 'born of a woman';<sup>1</sup> and the attitude of some of the early Fathers can be seen in their reading of the story of Cana, in which they see Christ as rebuking his mother, either because she doubted (Tertullian) or because she sought glory through his power (Chrysostom).<sup>2</sup> The first chapters of Luke underline her unique dignity: 'The holy Spirit will come upon thee, and the power of the most High will overshadow thee'; 'How have I deserved to be thus visited by the mother of my Lord?'; 'From this day forward all generations will count me blessed';<sup>3</sup> and while there is still no explicit attribution of personal sanctity, still less of sinlessness, one can say that the germ of all that will follow through the ages is contained in the threefold idea of Mary as overshadowed by the Spirit, as mediating (at Cana) between men and Christ, and (at the Cross, according to an age-old application of Christ's words to John) by being made the mother of all mankind.

In the first centuries the Church had to safeguard the truth about Christ from two opposing errors: that of denying the reality of his humanity, and that of denying his divinity. It was to counter the first of these heresies that the phrase *natus ex Maria* was

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Misunderstanding of our Lord's reply to his mother has often been due to a misreading of the sense of his words: 'Woman' is, in the original idiom, a term not of rebuke but of honour; the rest of the phrase can mean simply 'Leave it to me'. (Cf. Lagrange. *Evang. s. S. Jean in ch. ii, 4.*)

<sup>3</sup> Luke i, 35, 43, 48.

formulated: the Christ-man was really formed in the womb of Mary; on the other hand it was to assert Christ's divinity that the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) declared Mary to be *Theotokos parthenos*, the virgin Mother of God. The Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) reiterates this definition, and in so doing closes this stage of mariological development—the stage of precise doctrinal definitions; and there will be no further official development until 1854. But meanwhile the theological interest in and discussion of the personality, the attributes, the status of Mary continue: Anselm explores the question of her close relationship with the Trinity; her greatness (greater than that of the angels) is elucidated; the idea of her sinlessness becomes clearer until it develops into the controversies concerning the immaculate conception—if she was sinless she was not in need of redemption by Christ, which cannot be true since she is a member of the human race and the human race as a whole was under the bondage of sin; if on the other hand she was redeemed she cannot have been sinless, which derogates from the dignity of the Word born of her flesh—controversies which were finally settled by the recognition that she was indeed redeemed but by preservation, not by liberation, from original sin.

In the middle ages a new approach is discernible, no longer so predominantly intellectual but now more affective; the age of chivalry, of courtly love, of the exaltation of woman, brings a marked growth in the *cultus* of Mary in, so to speak, her own right: she had always been venerated, she had been portrayed in Christian art, but always with her Son: now she is portrayed alone, she becomes Our Lady, *Notre Dame*, a sovereign, a Queen; at the same time she becomes also the refuge of sinners, interceding for them: there is in other words a simultaneous development of interest in and devotion towards her as Queen of glory and as the mother of men, of sinners, praying for them to her Son. This latter aspect of her place in the Church and the world's history was the subject of renewed theological speculation about her exact rôle in the work of redemption: her *fiat* was recognized as a free act of acceptance of her rôle and therefore as the beginning of a true co-operation; it was seen moreover as given, as St Thomas says, *loco totius humanae naturae*, speaking for mankind as a whole; the passion of Christ is linked with her freely given and suffered compassion, and his universal love and redemptive will are linked with her universal motherhood. The attacks upon her

during the Reformation period again produced a renewal of study and a greater precision of definition regarding her graces, her knowledge, her sufferings, her glory, her power, her mediating intercession at the throne of God; at the same time the precise nature of the *cultus* due to her was explored, and the term *hyperdulia* invented: a veneration much greater than the *dulia* given to all the saints, yet infinitely removed from the adoration which is due to God alone. The development in the seventeenth century, largely under French influence, was not entirely felicitous, tending as it did to the florid, the rhetorical, the unctuous, to a devotion in which can be discerned the germs of modern *bondieuseries* and repository art.<sup>4</sup>

With the nineteenth century we come to the great age of 'mariophanies', of Lourdes and the rest; and these in turn led, or helped to lead, to that yet greater concentration on the power and importance of Mary, her loving activity within the redemptive plan, which is characteristic of our own century. Yet always these accretions of glory seem to flow from her back to her Son: it is as when Dante, looking into the eyes of Beatrice, sees reflected in them not his own image but that of Christ. Her greatest glory is, as it always was, to give glory to him. To think of Lourdes as a purely personal glorification of Mary would be entirely wrong: its affirmation of her divine motherhood is an implicit affirmation moreover of the legitimacy of religious development, of 'popular' forms of piety;<sup>5</sup> the emphasis here as in other shrines on the rosary

<sup>4</sup> What a heart-felt relief it is to turn, from the turgid sentimentality of modern 'devotions' to the Mother of God, to such splendid things as the prayer which Villon, the rascal-poet, wrote for his old mother—

*Dame du ciel, regente terrienne,  
Emperiere des infernaux palus—*

and which was so beautifully paraphrased by Synge:

'Mother of God, that's Lady of the Heavens, take myself, the poor sinner, the way I'll be along with them that's chosen.

'Let you say to your Son that he'd have a right to forgive my share of sins, when it's the like he's done, many's the day, with big and famous sinners. I'm a poor aged woman was never at school and is no scholar with letters, but I've seen pictures in the chapel with Paradise on one side, and harps and pipes in it, and the place on the other side, where sinners do be boiled in torment; the one gave me great joy, the other a great fright and scaring; let me have the good place, Mother of God, and it's in your faith I'll live always.

'It's yourself that bore Jesus, that has no end or death, and he the Lord Almighty, that took our weakness and gave himself to sorrows, a young and gentle man. It's himself is our Lord surely, and it's in that faith I'll live always.'

<sup>5</sup> 'Popular' is not at all the same thing as 'debased': valuable developments of theology and ultimately of defined doctrine have come from the devotional life of the people;

is after all a recall to the 'mysteries' of Christ's life and passion; and the 'message' of all these appearances, the call to a *metanoia*, to a change of heart, to repentance and prayer, is a call to accept, acknowledge and serve the sovereignty of Christ and to live within the framework of his redemptive plan.

Thus we can see the essential office of Mary as being not only to bring us grace from Christ, but to lead us back to Christ, just as we can see the essential purpose of her motherhood of men as revealing to us, and leading us back to, the motherhood of God. At the same time, she—who is so often liturgically identified with Wisdom and with the Church, leads us back to the essentially *motherly* nature of the Church.

We think of the Church as 'summed up' in the person of our Father the Pope; and we are right; so too every parish is in a sense summed up in the person of the priest, the father, who is its pastor; though to be accurate we should think here of the *ecclesia docens*: it is the teaching, authoritative, jurisdictional aspects of the Church which are summed up in the papacy. Even so, the personal infallibility of the Pope derives from and expresses the infallibility of the Church: it is the Church, in the last resort, that 'has the mind of Christ'. And we think of the Church not as father but as mother. Too often nowadays the aspect of the Church as life-giving or life-renewing Mother is overlaid and obscured by an exaggerated preoccupation with its paternal aspects—with the legal, the canonical, the penal aspects of authority. True, in the Christian ideal, law and life are one; but it is possible to separate them, so that law is de-vitalized into legalism. Dr Erich Fromm defines a patriarchal society in terms of an authoritarian, hierarchical, legal social-system; a matriarchal society as one in which the moving force is to be found in the laws of blood, love, and the solidarity of all humanity;<sup>6</sup> the Church can be seen as a matriarchy not in the sense of being 'run by women' but inasmuch as the paternal-legal aspects of its life must always be ensouled by the maternal aspects, the endless

but popular devotion can 'go wrong' just as on another level theological speculation can go wrong; to approve of popular forms of prayer or worship (e.g. the rosary) is certainly not to approve of such disastrous phenomena as the 'Lourdes hymn' or the *objets de piété* which pullulate in Lourdes and other shrines; nor can we deny the undeniable fact of a good deal of naive superstition masquerading as religion within the Christian family.

6 *The Forgotten Language*, pp. 190-1.

torrent of life-giving waters, the laws of blood and love and solidarity, the all-embracing Cross, the font-womb which is the comfort of the afflicted and the refuge of sinners.

All this is vividly illustrated for us in the rosary. In the first place, we tend to think of it as a prayer to our Lady, and the bulk of the words we say are indeed addressed to her; but the *Hail Mary* is in fact bracketed between the prayer to our heavenly Father and the praise of the Trinity; and the events and truths recalled in the mysteries are concerned primarily not with Mary—from some of the events she is absent altogether—but with Christ, and then with his Mother precisely as his mother-to-be or mother-in-being and, finally, as queen and mother of all men. During her Son's earthly life she is with him when (and only when) she is needed, to serve and help him; when he is gone she mothers for a time the *pusillus grex*, the little flock which is the infant Church; and when, his glory accomplished, it is time for her to be glorified in her turn, her triumph does but underline for us, bring home to us, the love and mercy, the nearness, the motherhood, of God.

Some Catholics find it difficult to pray the rosary; and sometimes no doubt the reason is that despite its all but universal appeal, it is not 'their' prayer, they are temperamentally unsuited to it; but perhaps more often it is because they set about it the wrong way. There are the words to be said, the beads to be told, the events to be considered, and underneath all this there is the essence of all prayer, the awareness of God; and they find this multiplicity confusing, distracting, and they scold themselves for being unable to concentrate on all these things at one and the same time. But why should they? There are various ways of praying the rosary, and we can pick and choose according to our different temperaments or the needs and moods of the moment. We can, if we will, concentrate on the words we are saying ('Mother of God, pray for us, sinners'); or, knowing what we are saying, we can turn our immediate attention away from the individual words and phrases and concentrate on the scene with which we are concerned and with the ideas it suggests, its relevance to our own lives; or again, while retaining a vague awareness of the scene (whether as mental image or as idea) we can give all our attention to the divine love which lies behind it and is expressed through it: we can rest in the immobility of the divine reality which is

mediated to us through the moving panorama of the temporal events. We can do now one or another of these things, free and tranquil of mind; we can also do them all simultaneously if we remember that the essence of prayer is the awareness of God and that all the other activities comprised in the saying of the rosary can be of great help precisely in stilling the other levels of the personality and so making this deep awareness possible. Women often find it easier to concentrate on a lecture if they can do some knitting during it; in the same way the telling of beads can tranquillize the body and help the mind to concentrate; the vague awareness of a picture in the imagination (vague because quiet, unstrained) can similarly help to keep that faculty stilled; words, too, if they are used in the same effortless sort of way, can occupy and still the body, the imagination, the surface of the mind, and so allow the essential process to take place in the deeper levels of the soul, in the 'fund of the spirit'.

It seems reasonable then to suppose that the praying of the rosary should involve not great mental strain and effort but on the contrary a feeling of freedom and tranquillity. Indeed for those who have made themselves familiar with it, and who love God and his mother, this must surely be the case unless they put unreasonable demands upon themselves. The rosary is a unity; its various mysteries are all part of a single pattern, so that the words or events of one scene may well lead the mind to think of another or of the total pattern or again of some parallel between them and something—whether realized or hoped for—in our own lives. As we begin the joyful mysteries the 'Behold the hand-maid' of the first mystery may remind us of the 'Behold from henceforth' of the second, or of the 'Behold the Man' of a later mystery, or again of how that initial humility, the humble acceptance of things whether great or lowly as they are, is the key to the fulfilling of the pattern in our own lives as in these others', the key to the creative living of our lives, to learning from and being reborn through the experience, the joys and sorrows, of which our lives are made up and out of which the final glory is to be fashioned. There is no harm in allowing ideas and images to float thus to and fro in mind and imagination provided that they do not stray too far from the pattern or some point in it or some application of it or from the reality behind it, and provided also, once again, that this gentle activity has a quietening effect on the

personality as a whole and so enables the deeper levels to be tranquil, attentive, receptive.

It is in fact soothing to allow the fingers to play with well-worn, well-loved beads, the lips to murmur again and again a well-loved phrase, the imagination to linger over a well-loved scene, the mind to consider a familiar but always evocative story or idea; on the other hand we know how quickly, when we make an effort to recollect ourselves, to concentrate, the body begins to fidget, the mind to wander, the imagination to lead us off into endless irrelevancies; we know that if we attempt to pray we shall almost certainly be distracted after the first few moments, our attention will wander and perhaps we shall fail for quite some time to advert to the fact that it is wandering. But the solution to our difficulties does not seem to lie in tremendous effort and stress and strain, for these can never bring about in us that tranquillity which is the condition of awareness. The solution must lie rather in learning to be humble and patient and gentle. If at the beginning of our time of prayer we have made an initial act of adoring awareness of God we need not be discouraged by the fact that our attention to him is so short-lived, so piece-meal. If for some part of the allotted time we can keep our surface-consciousness occupied with divine things as the rosary can help us to do we should rejoice: we are doing well, and our inability to do more must be taken as part of those human limitations which we have humbly to accept as part of ourselves; but even if we fail to achieve this much we need not think our time is wasted: our initial attention and intention have laid open to God's impulse and influence the 'fund of the spirit', and in the fund of the spirit what matters most is not what we do but what is done in us. 'He that is mighty hath done great things in me, and holy is his name.' In the Mass (explicitly in the *epiclesis* of the Greek rite but equivalently in the Roman Canon too) we pray that when we have fulfilled all the external requirements of the rubrics, and when the earthly offerings of bread and wine have been brought to the altar and duly prepared, the quickening Spirit may come, the Fire may descend upon the altar, so that the offerings 'may become for us the Body and Blood' of the incarnate Word. The rosary too gives us 'external' things to occupy—and enrich—the periphery of consciousness, the beads, the words, the images; but these things will best fulfil their purpose if they make all

things quiet in us, so that then, our 'house being now at rest', we may allow unimpeded entry to the quickening Spirit. We pray to and think of our Lady, but it is essentially in order that she may lead us to her Son; we think of the human events in the life of that Son, but it is essentially that we may be led *per humanitatem ad divinitatem*, through those human things to the divine reality they express and reveal. We pray, 'Mother of God, pray for us, sinners'; but it is essentially in order that through growing in love and understanding of the motherhood of Mary we may be led to know and love and adore, to accept and so be renewed by, the creative Motherhood of God.



## OUR LADY IN TRADITION

REGINALD GINNS, O.P.

THE centenary year of Lourdes has drawn the attention of the world as it was drawn in that wonderful year 1858. Some approach with an attitude of reverence, others with a faint but somewhat sceptical admiration, and there will no doubt be others who greet the celebrations with a scoffing smile of contempt. So far, however, there has been little sign of scoffing or contempt. Indeed the most striking thing that has appeared since the opening of the centenary year was, not the enthusiastic crowds of pilgrims who assisted at the ceremonies of February 11, but the dignified and respectful way in which the great journals of the secular press reported the event. They showed no fumbling or hesitation in the use of Catholic terminology; they spoke of 'the Blessed Virgin' and 'Saint Bernadette' without the use of inverted commas, nor was there any hint of scepticism about the visions or the miracles of Lourdes.

In tone and spirit it was worlds away from the old cheap insult of the late Dean Inge about 'the lucrative imposture of Lourdes'; or from the less impolite but equally contemptuous observation of the learned Cambridge don who, when writing of the theophanies and miracles of the old pagan shrines, proceeded to say: 'Aristides believes in the healings of Asclepios at Epidaurus as

surely as the most ignorant French peasant believes in those of Lourdes, and with as little idea of the real explanation of them'.<sup>1</sup> He had no excuse for being ignorant of the fact that belief in the miracles of Lourdes is not confined to ignorant French peasants; there were plenty of Catholics in the university at Cambridge, some of them among his fellow dons. Moreover he prudently abstained from providing us with what *is* the real explanation of the miracles at Lourdes. Earlier in the book containing the above extract, he prides himself on the fact that at Cambridge 'we are a little more matter-of-fact than Oxford, a little more content to confine ourselves to verifying our references and to recording what we find'; in a word more scientific, as he says. But it is not scientific to close one's eyes and mind to evidence like that accumulated by the medical bureau at Lourdes, or to dismiss all the medical men concerned as ignorant French peasants.

The journalists, on the other hand, who are not so bad in spite of the rough handling they have received lately in the correspondence columns of the daily press, show a much more scientific and honest attitude of mind. At any rate, they go and look at the facts, and the facts have certainly impressed them. It is true that the commercialism of Lourdes stuck in their throats a little, but knowing the world as they do, they did not make a great song about that. One of them even twisted it round in a good sense; for, as he wittily remarked, perhaps the greatest miracle of the centenary year is the fact that the sellers of the *objets de piété* closed their shops on February 11 without being asked to do so.

But while we welcome this mood, we are not so confident as to count upon its persevering in all the ranks of our non-Catholic friends during this coming year. When they begin to notice the continuance of the crowds of pilgrims flocking to Lourdes by every known means of transport, ship, plane, train, motor-coach, car, bicycle and on foot, it is likely that we shall hear once more the old threadbare complaints about mariolatry, putting Mary in the place of Christ, offering a worship to Mary which has no basis in Scripture or apostolic tradition, and that the Catholic attitude to our Lady is no more than a continuation of the old pagan worship of the Mother Goddess. Was it not, the learned men will say, at Ephesus, the seat of the licentious worship of

Cybele and Diana, that Mary received the title Theotokos, the God-bearer or Mother of God?

We must be prepared to deal patiently but effectively with these difficulties, some of them no doubt real enough for those nurtured in a tradition that for centuries was hostile to every sign of special reverence paid to our Lady. The root of this hostility seemed at first sight sincere enough: every honour shown to Mary was so much honour stolen from what was owing to God and Christ, her Son. In view, therefore, of those sincere Christians who have honest difficulties on this subject—and all those who have had experience in the instruction of converts know that there are such people—we ought to take care that, in our enthusiasm for the praise of our Lady, we do not give occasion for such difficulties. And this we should certainly do if we used exaggerated terminology about her. The sober truth of the Gospel and the Church's official doctrine is surely quite strong enough, and it needs no reinforcement at our hands. Mary is the Mother of God; when we have weighed the meaning of those six simple words and drawn the conclusions from them which should force themselves on our mind, it would be impertinent to add our improvements after the example of the writers of the apocryphal gospels, who tried to improve on the sober narrative of the canonical Gospels.<sup>2</sup>

In view of non-Catholic misconceptions about our devotion to the Blessed Virgin, it seems regrettable to use such expressions as that of a recent writer in the Catholic press, who said that the present age might well be called the Marian Age. Certainly it is true enough that in the past century there has been a notable development in what is called Marian theology; but even that expression will be misunderstood by people like the Anglican clergyman who objected to the present writer that our doctrine of the Immaculate Conception turned Mary into a sort of god. Of course it will be said that such an objection only served to show how great was his ignorance of this very doctrine; but if we are concerned about the salvation of our neighbour we have to take into account the lamentable fact of such ignorance. And if the doctrinal development of our Lady's position in the scheme of Catholic theology has received great advance in our own time,

2 Cf. St Bernard's warning: *Virgo regia falso non eget honore, veris cumulata honorum titulis*: 'Richly endowed with real honour, the royal Virgin needs no false honours.'

it does not follow that popular devotion to her is by that much greater than it was in the past. That is a question only settled by studying the Church's life and history; and those who are familiar with the old hymnologies in praise of Mary, and much more those who have read the writings of the early theologians, will be slow to maintain that the past ages of the Church fell short of us in that respect.

In 1855, three years before the apparitions at Lourdes, Bishop Ullathorne, that fine theologian and patristic scholar, wrote his book on the Immaculate Conception. In his second chapter he writes of the way in which the Fathers of the Church speak of the dignity of Mary, and begins by saying that those who read the Fathers only in the brief extracts generally quoted can form no idea of 'the amplitude and magnificence with which they extol the praises of the Mother of God'. He proceeds to give some extracts himself, beginning with a sermon preached by St Proclus, a disciple of the great Chrysostom and much admired by St Cyril. It was a sermon preached at Constantinople on a festival of the Blessed Virgin in 429 and received with great applause by the people present. So well was it considered to express the orthodox attitude towards her that it was afterwards placed at the head of the acts of the Council of Ephesus held in 431. It is a long chain of epithets and instances drawn from the Scriptures and from theology and applied to our Lady. The following will serve as examples.

'Where sin abounded, there grace has superabounded. . . . That workshop wherein was wrought the union of natures (i.e. the divine and human nature in Christ). . . . That market of the commerce of salvation. . . . Truly the bright cloud which bore him bodily who sitteth between the cherubim. . . . Handmaid and mother, virgin and heaven. . . . The only bridge of God to men. . . . By his birth he made woman the gate of salvation, who previously had been the gate of sin. . . . By no means was the architect dishonoured, for he dwelt in the house which he himself had built. . . . As he formed her without any stain of her own, so he proceeded from her contracting no stain.'

Ullathorne follows with a moving discourse on the Blessed Virgin preached by Basil Bishop of Seleucia about the same date; and the force of this is all the greater from the fact that Basil was for a time regarded as an adherent of the monophysite heresy,

and for that reason temporarily deprived of his see. The reading of his sermon recalls to me the occasion when I copied it years ago, and I can do no better than copy it again here.

'He who would exalt the holy Virgin and Mother of God will find a most ample subject for his praises. But in sight of my own weakness I am stricken to the soul and have long delayed. Oppressed with the weight of my sins, I have hesitated and delayed upon the matter demanded by such a discourse as this. It seemed to me to be a work for those whose vision is very clear and who are eminently purified both in body and soul; that only those who have been illuminated in mind by divine grace can fittingly speak the praises that are due to the Mother of God. But there is nothing in me that can inspire me with such confidence and freedom of speech; for my lips have not been cleansed like those of Isaias, who awaited the seraph with the live coal. Nor like the godly Moses have I loosened the shoes from the feet of my soul. With what fear, then, ought I to be encompassed when I take it upon me to offer praise to the Mother of God lest, through some indiscretion of mine, I might utter words unsuited to her dignity. It is not my aim to climb one of the mountains of this world, whence I might be able to pass through the overspreading atmosphere and be caught up into the midst of the stars shining in all their brilliance, even if such a thing could be accomplished. . . . But lifting my head even higher than these, it is my purpose, so far as it is in my power with the help of the Spirit who guides us to divine things, to pass by the choirs of angels, to rise above the brightness of the thrones, the honoured dignity of the dominations, the principalities in their place of command, the clear lustre of the powers, the clear-sighted purity of the many-eyed cherubim, and the six-winged seraphim with their movements unrestrained in every direction; and if there be any created being above these, I will not there stay my course or my longing desire, but will dare to fix intently my curious gaze and, as far as is permitted for man in these chains of flesh, will contemplate the co-eternal brightness of the Father's glory; then, surrounded and enlightened with that True Light, there will I begin the hymn of praise to the Mother of God from whence she became the Mother of God, and obtained that name and title. . . . The great mystery of the Mother of God transcends

both speech and reason. . . . What praises can we offer her as she deserves, when everything of this world is beneath her merits? . . . Who then will not admire the vast power of of the Mother of God? Who does not see how far she is raised above the saints? For if God gave to his servants a grace so great that by their very touch they healed the sick . . . how much more power, think you, has he given to his Mother? With what gifts has he adorned her? If Peter is called blessed and entrusted with the keys of heaven because he called Christ the Son of the living God, how much more blessed than everyone else must she be who deserved to bear him whom Peter confessed?’

After such an encomium, Basil of Seleucia ends his sermon in the following really delightful fashion:

‘But I am afraid lest, though I could say a lot more about her, I should say little that is worthy of her dignity and so bring all the more shame upon myself. So I will draw in the sail of my discourse and retire into the harbour of silence.’

In the thirteenth chapter of the same book Ullathorne returns again to the witness of the early Fathers concerning the mind and the devotion of the Church towards our Lady, and a mere perusal of the few short extracts he gives leads emphatically to the conclusion that, only out of ignorance or blind prejudice could anyone today maintain that Catholic doctrine about and devotion to the Mother of Christ is a growth of later ages. What later age has given expression to anything that can be compared with what Augustine said at the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth century? ‘No heart can conceive, no tongue can express, the effect of her dignity and grace.’ Or with that other famous remark of his in the thirty-sixth chapter of his treatise *On Nature and Grace*, where he admits that all have sinned, even the just, ‘except the Blessed Virgin Mary of whom, for the honour of the Lord, I will have no question whatsoever where sin is concerned. For whence can we know the measure of grace conferred on her to vanquish sin on every side, on her who deserved to conceive and bring forth him who manifestly had no sin?’

Now those who are familiar with the genuine stream of authentic theological teaching in the Catholic Church will be well aware that later theologians of repute never depart from the patristic tradition so clearly shown above. The principle on which

that patristic tradition is based is that summed up so concisely by St Eucherius, Bishop of Lyons in the first half of the fifth century, the friend of Cassian and St Hilary of Arles: 'If you would know how great is the Mother, think you how great is the Son'. We cannot take a better example to demonstrate the fidelity of later theologians to patristic tradition than the example of the Church's official theologian,<sup>3</sup> St Thomas Aquinas. Though often considered an innovator, he was certainly no innovator in the field of dogmatic theology but a strict traditionalist who adhered even to the words of his predecessors. Try to count his references to and quotations from Augustine, for example. His teaching about our Lady is summed up in QQ. xxvii-xxxvii of the Third Part of the *Summa* under the treatise on the Incarnation. Consider the two following extracts from the fifth article of Q. xxvii.

'The nearer anything approaches to the source of its being the more it partakes of the effect issuing from that source. Hence Dionysius says in his *De Caelesti Hierarchia* that the angels, who are nearer to God than men, partake more than men in divine goodness. Now Christ is the source of grace: the authoritative source in so far as he is God, the instrumental cause in so far as he is man. Hence John writes in i, 17: *Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*. But the Blessed Virgin Mary was nearer to Christ than anyone else in his humanity, for his human nature he took from her. Consequently much more than anyone else was she bound to receive from Christ the fullness of grace.'

'To each one God gives grace in proportion to the work for which he chooses them. And seeing that Christ in so far as he is man was predestined and chosen, as we read in Romans i, 4, so that he might be *predestinated Son of God in the power of sanctification*, to him alone was it granted to have such a fullness of grace as might overflow on to everyone else. Hence John writes in i, 16: *Of his fullness we have all received*. But the Blessed Virgin Mary was granted such a fullness of grace as was fitting for one who was brought into close proximity to him who is the author of grace; that she might receive into herself him who is full of every grace; that further, by becoming his Mother, she might in some degree be the means by which grace is derived by all others.'

3 Cf. *Cod. Jur. Can. Canon* 589.

We may add one more quotation which might easily escape the notice of those who study the place occupied by our Lady in Thomistic theology; it occurs in the First Part of the *Summa*, Q. xxv, where St Thomas treats of the Power of God. In the last article he raises the interesting problem: whether God could have done better things than he has in fact done. His reply is that, absolutely speaking, it cannot be said that the works of creation have exhausted the divine power for good; therefore God could have made better things than he has made. This seems to put him at variance with the traditional teaching that we have seen above about the perfection of the Mother of God, which implies that she could not be better than she is. But he makes an exception for her, and on the same principle that serves as the foundation of the whole of traditional Marian theology:

‘We must say that the humanity of Christ, for the reason that it is in union with God; and the final happiness of mankind, for the reason that it consists in the enjoyment of God; and the Blessed Virgin also, for the reason that she is the Mother of God; all these three possess an infinite dignity which they receive from the infinite goodness of God. And on that account there could not be anything better than they are, just as there could not be anything better than God.’

This was evidently a subject on which there existed speculation and discussion in the theological schools at the time, for we find in the treatises on our Lady (*De Laudibus B. Virginis* and *Biblia Mariana*) long attributed to the authorship of St Thomas’ Dominican master, St Albert the Great, but now claimed to be by another writer, such phrases as these: ‘We can think of no grace given to a creature greater than the grace of being the Mother of God’; and again: ‘The Son gives an infinite goodness to his Mother, for every tree is known by its fruit’. While St Bonaventure, the contemporary and friend of Aquinas, writes in his *Speculum* what the latter wrote in his *Summa*: ‘God could make a better world than this, but he could not make a greater mother than the Mother of God’.

But as this article began with a reference to the centenary year of Lourdes and the apparitions there are so closely connected with the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception—the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception dates from 8 December, 1858, four years before the apparitions—it may be thought that

I ought here to show how the attitude of St Thomas to that doctrine is reconcilable with the claim that he is so strict a traditionalist. For it is commonly said that Aquinas was a determined opponent of the doctrine; and, moreover, a dogma is not defined as part of the revealed truth of the faith unless it can be shown that there has been a constant tradition in the teaching Church in favour of that doctrine. It was the purpose of Ullathorne's book to prove that this was so, that there was justification for the words in the encyclical *Ineffabilis Deus*: 'The illustrious monuments of venerable antiquity of both the Eastern and Western Church most strongly bear witness that [the doctrine] has always existed in the Church as received by tradition, and that it is stamped with the character of a revealed doctrine'. Not that it was held clearly and explicitly by all, or even admitted by all; otherwise there would be no reason for defining it, that is to say, clearly stating it in explicit and precise terms as had been done during the early centuries of the Church with regard to the development of the doctrine of the Incarnation.

How St Thomas stands in regard to this question may be well illustrated by the excellent treatment of it in Fr Bridgett's *Our Lady's Dowry*, where he gives an account of a correspondence that took place between Nicholas, a monk of St Alban's, and Peter of Celles, Abbot of Saint Remi, during the century that preceded St Thomas. Nicholas wrote defending the English custom of celebrating the feast of Our Lady's Conception, finding fault with St Bernard's opposition to the celebration of the feast at Lyons—St Bernard who was so strong a traditionalist and such a devout servant of Mary. It is worthy of note that the custom of celebrating the feast in this country dated from early times, and Bridgett maintains that it spread through Europe from England. Peter's reply is a model of reason and tolerance.

I yield to none, he says, in devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and I am ready to take part in her feasts, whether it be her conception, her nativity or her assumption that is being celebrated. But he objects that in the ecclesiastical circles with which he is familiar the feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin is a novelty. So far as he is aware Rome has given no authority for the observance of the feast, and it is for the See of Peter to decide on matters like this. If Rome decides in its favour, nothing would please him better. And as for St Bernard's opposition, has not Rome just

recently canonized him (1174)? Therefore he concludes: 'But if you wish to strike a new coin different from what is in common circulation and without the approval of St Peter, to whom it belongs to approve or to disapprove the order of the universal Church, then I hold back, nor will I pass the bounds marked out'.

No one will feel inclined to criticize unfavourably such a reasonable reply; the treatment of the question by St Thomas is an echo of it a hundred years later, though his language is more moderate and quite impersonal. Peter ends on a somewhat harsh note: 'I believe in the Gospel, not in dreams'. There is nothing like that in the *Summa*. Thomas admits<sup>4</sup> that although the churches in Rome do not celebrate the feast of our Lady's conception, nevertheless Rome raises no opposition to its celebration in other parts of the Church; consequently it is not for him to condemn it. But while few were so steeped in the theological writings of the past as he, there is an implicit admission on his part that the teaching and tradition were not sufficiently clear and well defined to enable him to assert as true the doctrine as it was defined in the nineteenth century, after so many centuries of study and discussion. And it must be borne in mind that St Thomas was writing in opposition to those who were certainly in error about the doctrine of our Lady's sinlessness. Some, for example, sought to exclude her from the universal need of the redemptive grace of Christ, and so 'derogated from the dignity due to Christ'. Others held that she was cleansed from original sin before her soul came into union with her body; and that, he said, was impossible. For cleansing from original sin is by sanctification, and sanctification is by grace, and the subject of grace is only the rational creature, and the rational creature does not come into being until the union of soul and body. Moreover, he adds, how could the soul be in need of cleansing before it was joined to the body? It cannot be thought that God created the soul of our Lady, or anyone else's soul, in a state of sin. Original sin comes from man, not from God, and consequently must arise in the soul through contact with the body.

Here, as in all his writings, he is concerned with the work of reconciling reason and faith; hence he will not admit anything that runs counter to either. Therefore going only so far as the guidance of the authentic voice of Scripture and Tradition will

<sup>4</sup> *Summa* III, xxvii, 2.

lead him on the one hand, and only so far as fidelity to human reason will permit him on the other, he draws the following prudent conclusions: first, that Mary being the Mother of God was higher and more privileged than any human creature; secondly, since he believed that others were sanctified and cleansed from original sin before birth, then he ought to say as much at least of her; lastly, that she was therefore set free from original sin before she came from her mother's womb, but at what point of time he was unable to declare. The Church has informed him and us, in words provided by St Thomas, on the point of time: not *before* her body was animated by her soul; not *after* her body was animated by her soul; but, in the *very instant* when soul and body were united, the redemptive grace of her Son saved her soul from contracting the stain of original sin with which her body, descended from Adam and Eve, was waiting to infect it.



## MOTHER OF OUR CREATOR

SISTER MARY ROBERT, O.P.

**H**AIL, then from us, O holy mystical Trinity, who has gathered us all together in this church of Mary, the Mother of God. Hail, from us Mary, Mother of God, majestic treasure of the whole world, the lamp unquenchable, the crown of virginity, the sceptre of orthodoxy, the indestructible temple, the dwelling of the Illimitable, Mother and Virgin, through whom he is called in the holy Gospels "Blessed who cometh in the name of the Lord". Hail, thou who didst contain him in thy holy virginal womb, who cannot be contained, thou through whom the Holy Trinity is glorified and adored throughout the world; through whom heaven rejoices, through whom the angels and archangels are glad; through whom devils are put to flight, through whom the tempter-devil fell from heaven; through whom the fallen creature is taken up into heaven; through whom all creation, held fast by the madness of idolatry has come to the

knowledge of the truth; through whom holy baptism has come to believers, and the oil of gladness; through whom churches are erected throughout the world; through whom the nations are brought to repentance. And what more shall I say? Through whom the only-begotten Son of God has shone forth, a light "to those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death", through whom the prophets foretold, through whom the apostles preached salvation to the nations; through whom the dead are raised, and kings reign.<sup>1</sup>

These words were written over fifteen hundred years ago by one of the eastern Fathers of the Church, and yet they contain the same sentiments which arise in the hearts of all devotees of Mary during this, her special month of May. We praise and extol our heavenly Mother first of all for what she is in herself, always acknowledging however that what she is has been brought about by the grace of God; and then we proceed to remind her of all that she through her perfect correspondence to that grace has done for us.

When we speak of May Devotions our memory immediately recalls to us the voice of our parish priest giving out the notices for the week, or perhaps we glance at the times of the services as we are borne through the church porch by the exit crowd after Mass on Sunday. These devotions were sanctioned by Holy Mother Church in a brief of Pope Pius VII on 21 March, 1815, in which an indulgence of 300 days was granted to the faithful who practised them either in a church or in their homes. They consisted of prayers addressed to our Lady, usually the rosary and the litany, to which in our own times is often added Benediction. But it was about thirty years later that this form of Marian devotion was introduced into England by that indefatigable Rosminian, Father Gentili, and Mother Margaret Hallahan, O.P., was instrumental in bringing about the first post-Reformation procession of our Lady.

These special prayers and services held to honour Mary during May are not meant to be the summit of our devotion to the Mother of God, indeed they are only the starting point, for real devotion consists in an understanding of and a striving to imitate that to which we are devoted. Therefore they are only a means

<sup>1</sup> From sermon of St Cyril of Alexandria preached before the Fathers of the Council of Ephesus in 431. (*Homily 4. Acta Conciliorum Œcumenicorum*. I, I, 2, 102-103.)

to an end, namely a perfect understanding of Mary as she was on earth, her virtues, particularly her humility and obedience; her dealings with her fellow men, and perhaps most of all the selflessness with which she placed herself at the disposal of her Son. This understanding will lead to imitation which, in so far as it reaches perfection, will determine the greatness of our share in the happiness of our heavenly Mother. This month then is set aside for general devotion to our Lady; that is, no particular part of her life is chosen out to occupy our thought, but we practise then in a more concentrated way our normal devotion of extolling the praises of the Mother of God and strive to imitate more perfectly the virtues of her who is the model of virtue. Later in the year we see that the Church suggests for us a particular Marian devotion, that of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to which the month of August is dedicated. Surely it is most fitting that this devotion should thus be chosen out since Almighty God himself chose and fashioned her throughout eternity and made her, after the humanity of his Son, his most perfect creation, his spouse and his mother.

Separating these two months of Mary come two others which are dedicated to the Sacred Humanity of her Son: June, set aside long since to the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and July almost rivalling it with the time-honoured cult of the Precious Blood.

The Sacred Heart. At once we see before us a statue clothed in red and white, with long flowing locks and an expression of forced sympathy if not downright unconcern. How unlike our Blessed Lord! How unlike the man who worked hard in an unknown village for thirty years for us, the man who lived an intensely active life for three years, walking the countryside, homeless; trying to tell uninterested and worldly people about the kingdom of their Father in heaven! Yet we know that this man was the eternal God who had entered our life by taking to himself our human nature. This man who always seemed to take the side of sinners and wrongdoers was God, this man who befriended outcasts and strangers was God; he who embraced little children, who had his own special friends, who dared to discuss the minute details of the law with the most learned, was all the time the eternal God who had become man for our salvation. And only too well do we know that this God-Man, after three years were over, proved to us why he came to earth

at all: 'This is the greatest love a man can show, that he should lay down his life for his friends.'<sup>2</sup>

A love of the Sacred Heart means a love of Jesus himself: a love of Jesus working, living, suffering, dying, that will be quick to notice how selfless, patient, approachable, meek and humble he was and yet at the same time how full he was of manly courage and bravery. This devotion will not be found in prayer-books; it will spend itself in the service of our fellow men, both those who are actual members of the Mystical Body and those who are only members in potentiality, but nevertheless real ones. Most of all, perhaps, it will reveal itself by our thinking those 'thoughts of peace'<sup>3</sup> and striving to pass them on to other hearts in these days of discord and misunderstanding amongst men.

From the Heart itself we pass on to its life-stream, the Precious Blood: that blood of which Mary was the sole human agent and that blood which must have torn her mother's heart whenever she saw it being shed. This blood which, as we know, is the price by which we were ransomed, was not only poured forth on Calvary. Although the gospels only record the Circumcision, we can be sure that Jesus as a tiny child fell and grazed himself many times, that as a boy working in St Joseph's carpenter's shop he cut himself with chisel or saw, and many other occasions whilst playing with his friends which caused the precious stream to flow. There is also something else to consider: it is blood which enables our limbs to work; a member is useless to the body if the arteries supplying it with blood are empty. Therefore every action which our Lord performed can be traced ultimately to the efficacy of the Precious Blood. But of course our thoughts on this subject always fly to Calvary, to the scene where the immense love of Jesus was poured forth even to the last drop, and perhaps if, or when, we have attained the perfection of the devotion to the Sacred Heart as much as is possible in this life, we shall want to repay that love with a similar one—that of giving our life for him.

To close these four months we have in August the devotion to the sinless heart of Mary. If it was not for this heart perhaps the other three would have different subjects for our meditation. It is quite true that it was God's plan that Mary should be the mother of his Son, but this did not rob her of her free will; if it had done

<sup>2</sup> John xv, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Jeremias xxix, 11.

we could not claim her as a member of our race. When Gabriel brought God's message to her our Lady could have refused: it was only because she wanted with all her heart to do the will of God, however impossible it seemed, that she pronounced the *fiat* which moulded the destiny of the ages.<sup>4</sup> Mary's heart was empty of all things except God. This heart was not held down to earth by distractions of any kind—our Lady had them, of course—she was a woman, a wife, a mother, she had a home, a family, relations, friends, next-door neighbours; but where Mary differed from us in this matter is that she gave them all to God to settle and did not spend time solving them for herself.

This sinlessness of hers in which she was created through the foreseen merits of her divine Son and in which she persevered by her dogged correspondence to God's grace is the source of many of her other privileges. Mary was preserved from the first moment of her existence from all stain of sin because she was to be the *Theotokos*, the Mother of God. 'Therefore may God forbid that anyone should attempt to defraud Holy Mary of her privileges of divine grace and her special glory. For by a unique favour of our Lord and God she is confessed to be the most true and blessed Mother of God. She is truly the Mother of God not merely in name as a certain impious heresy claims, because she gave birth to a man who later became God, as we call the mother of priests and bishops such, because she gave birth not to a priest or a bishop but to a child who later became one. Not thus, I say, is Holy Mary the Mother of God, but rather because in her sacred womb was accomplished the mystery that, by reason of a singular and unique Unity of Person, even as the Word is flesh in flesh, so the man is God in God.'<sup>5</sup>

A person so full of the love of God as Mary was could not contain this love within herself. We know that our Lady was not an active missionary, she did not go about Galilee preaching the doctrine of her Son, but what she did do was more important. Because all her life was spent in his hidden service with no thought of self she was able in that supreme moment of trial to offer her dearest possession to God. And because of this sacrifice which her motherly heart freely made, our Holy Mother the Church has

<sup>4</sup> 'Through the Annunciation, the consent of the Virgin given in place of the whole human race was awaited.' (St Thomas. *Sum. Theol.* III. q. 30 a. 1.)

<sup>5</sup> The Commonitory of St Vincent of Lerins, Chapter 15.

given to Mary the title of Co-Redemptrix, the one who worked with the Redeemer. Since our Lady continues her work for us in heaven, for as Queen she stands at the right hand of the King always asking him to give us all the graces which she as a good mother perceives her children to need, we can truly give her the title of Mediatrix of all graces. 'It is clear then that we are very far from attributing to the Mother of God the power of producing supernatural grace, a power which belongs to God alone. Because, however, she transcends all others in holiness and in the intimacy of her union with Christ, and because she has been drawn by Christ into association with the work of human salvation, she merits for us congruously, as they say, what Christ merited for us condignly, and she is the principal Minister of the graces to be distributed.'<sup>6</sup>

The purity, the integrity, the perfection of the heart of Mary made it fitting that this organ of the human body, symbol as it is of love, should not in her case be overcome by the after-death penalty of our race that is the corruption of the grave; and so a short time after her death this most pure body was re-united to its complement in heaven, her perfect soul. Our Holy Father Pope Pius XII before defining the dogma of our Lady's Assumption spoke the following words: 'Therefore, the venerable Mother of God, united with Jesus Christ in a mysterious way from all eternity "in one and the same decree" of predestination, in her conception immaculate, a virgin inviolate in her divine motherhood, a noble associate of the Divine Redeemer, who won complete victory over sin and its consequences, received at last the supreme culmination of her privileges: to be preserved from the corruption of the sepulchre, and, like her Son before her, with death vanquished, to be carried aloft in body and soul to the exalted glory of heaven, and there as Queen to be resplendent at the right hand of her very own Son, the immortal King of the ages.'<sup>7</sup>

There then in heaven is Mary our mother and just as she carried out the will of her Son whilst on earth so she continues to please him in heaven. 'Woman, behold thy son',<sup>8</sup> said our Lord to his mother when he was hanging on the cross. At that moment

<sup>6</sup> A.A.S. Pius X. 1905, 150-155.

<sup>7</sup> A.A.S. *Commentarium Officiale*. 32 (1950), 753-771. John xix, 26.

<sup>8</sup> John xix, 26.

Mary became the mother of a countless number of souls, and now from her throne of glory she is ever making intercession for them, ever preparing a place for them, so that one day all her children may find an everlasting resting place in their Father's home.

'An angel chieftain was sent from heaven to greet the Forth-bringer of God with Hail! Then seeing thee, O Lord, take flesh he is wonder-rapt, and standing crieth out with no lips of flesh to her:

Hail! by whom true hap had dawned.

Hail! by whom mishap has waned.

Hail! sinful Adam's recalling.

Hail! Eve's tears redeeming.

Hail! height untrodden by thought of men.

Hail! depth unscanned by angels' ken.

Hail! for the kingly throne art thou.

Hail! for who beareth all thou bearest?

Hail! O star that bore the Sun.

Hail! the womb of God enfleshed.

Hail! through whom things made are all new made.

Hail! through whom becomes a Babe their Maker.

Hail! through whom the Maker is adored.

All we who psalm thy Son give praise to thee as to the living temple, O God's Forth-bringer; when within thy womb dwelt the Lord who holdeth all in his hand, he hallowed, honoured thee, and taught all to cry to thee:

Hail! tabernacle of God and the Word.

Hail! holy beyond all holy ones.

Hail! ark gilded by the Holy Ghost.

Hail! unfailing treasure-house of life.

Hail! precious diadem of godly Sovereigns.

Hail! worshipful honour of a worthy priesthood.

Hail! the Church's unassailable tower.

Hail! indestructible wall of the Kingdom.

Hail! thou whereby war-trophies are set up.

Hail! whereby foes are stricken.

Hail! my body's healing.

Hail! my soul's saving.

O Mother whom all must hymn, O thou who hast brought forth the Word most holy beyond all the holiest, take our present

ffering, keep all from every hurt, and deliver from all wrath to  
ome those who cry to thee. Alleluia.<sup>9</sup>

Nature seems to set forth her treasures in a scheme resembling  
hat of our Holy Mother the Church. In May everything has  
ome to life again; the young green of the trees and the fresh  
cent of flowers assures us that winter is now past. She who is  
Queen of the May ushered in him who is the life and light of the  
whole world and by so doing lifted the curse of darkness brought  
pon us by our first mother Eve, and so very appropriately we  
celebrate the feast of her Queenship on the last day of the month.

June brings perfection, everything at its best, each glorifying  
ts Creator according to its kind, each reflecting a ray of beauty  
rom the Sacred Heart. An air of expectancy fills July; myriads of  
lowers have shed their petals and the fruit is forming secretly  
ust as the merits and the fruits of the Precious Blood which are  
pplyed to our souls at Baptism must remain there and ripen, until  
God's time comes for us to scatter them abroad. Our cycle is  
ompleted by the month of August when nature is in her glory:  
ll the labour of ploughing and planting is forgotten, for the  
ields are now ripe to the harvest, all that remains to be done is to  
rather it into the barns. The heart of Mary certainly yielded the  
undredfold, 'full to the brim, pressed down and flowing over'.<sup>10</sup>  
What a proud Farmer Almighty God must be when he beholds  
his work of his hands, now reigning with him in heaven.

We too belong to the harvest, whether we are a full sheaf or  
ust a seed dying in the ground. May she, who brought forth the  
flower of David, bring to perfection what has been planted in  
our hearts, so that we also may be sowers and not only doers  
of that Word who came to earth in our flesh, to give his life  
(Heart) as a redemption (Blood) for many.

From the early 6th-century Akathistos Hymn. Translation by Vincent McNabb, O.P.  
(Blackfriars, Oxford, 1947.)

o Luke vi, 38.

## COMMENT

## ST PATRICK'S PURGATORY

IT might have been called 'Hy Brazil the Isle of the Blessed', for a blessed isle it unquestionably is. There is a reverence in the air here that is almost palpable. It has been generated by the prayers and sufferings of the pilgrims that have trod its rocky surface for fifteen hundred years. But the resemblance to Hy Brazil must end there. Hy Brazil was a mythical place, Lough Derg is a reality. It is one of the oldest places of pilgrimage in Christendom, and secure in that knowledge it reposes quietly and unobtrusively in the brown lake amongst the little bare hills. It has no need to advertise itself, for it is famous throughout the Christian world. To this hallowed spot year after year and century after century the faithful have flocked barefooted and penitent to lift up their hearts in prayer to God.

## HARDEST CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE

Situated in south-east Donegal, Lough Derg, or the Red Lake, is not a pretentious place. The lake itself is about six miles long by four miles wide and is studded with scattered islands. Surrounded by low barren hills, it is effectively cut off from the outside world. Station Island, or the Island of St Patrick's purgatory, is the penitential island. It is a tradition that the patron saint himself originated the penance here which still remains the hardest Christian pilgrimage in the world. Here he is supposed to have fasted in a cave for forty days and got a glimpse of the sufferings of Purgatory. Tradition has it also that it is from here that St Patrick banished the snakes and reptiles from Ireland for ever.

It is certain, however, that St Patrick personally evangelized this part of County Donegal. Dabheoc, a contemporary and disciple of St Patrick, became the first Abbot of nearby Saint's Island, and it is known that some of his monks lived on Station Island and took over the care of the penitential cave. From the death of the first Abbot in 516 until the monastery on Saint's

land was plundered by the Danes in 836 we have little knowledge of Lough Derg. All records were destroyed with the monastery.

#### MYSTERIES AND FANTASIES

Three hundred years after the sack by the Danes the monastic settlement on Saint's Island again arose. The Augustinians arrived between 1130 and 1134 and took charge of the pilgrimage on Inishmurray Island. It had in the interval gone on without interruption. From this time onwards we have a great deal of information about the pilgrimage. It became famous throughout Europe in the twelfth century and the writings of Henry of Saltry extended its fame even further. Some of his manuscripts dealing with the story of Lough Derg still survive. St Patrick's Purgatory had become identified with many mysteries and fantasies which bear no relationship to reality. The Saltry story was reproduced by Roger Wendover in his *Flores Historiarum* and from this in turn it was taken by Matthew Paris and included in his *Chronica Majora*. Several versions of the story were written in Old French and Old English.

In 1275 the Italian Jacobus de Voragine included the story of Lough Derg in his *Golden Legend*. It has been claimed that the great Dante used Saltry's account of Lough Derg when writing his immortal work, *The Divine Comedy*. Certainly some of the phrases of both works are very similar.

Pedro Calderon, the Spanish poet-priest and famous dramatist of the seventeenth century, wrote a drama, *St Patrick's Purgatory*, which was performed in the Royal Theatre, Madrid.

#### LEVELLED TO THE GROUND

Whilst the fame of Lough Derg as a place of alleged supernatural manifestations spread throughout the Continent and brought many travellers to the lonely Donegal lake, the Irish at home looked upon the place in a very different light. To them it was a place of spiritual healing to which they flocked in their thousands to do the fifteen-day fast and religious exercises. In 1503 a Papal Bull granted indulgences to the pilgrims.

The Franciscans took over charge of the pilgrimage from the Augustinians in 1631. Next year the island sanctuary was seized by the English Protestant forces and all buildings were levelled to the ground. During the reign of Queen Anne the pilgrimages

to the island were proclaimed by law as 'riotous and unlawful assemblies'. But despite this and the imposition of fines the pilgrimages continued with little interruption.

#### BOATING ACCIDENT

The year 1795 is one of note in the island's history. On July 12 of this year a particularly bad boating accident occurred. At this time the ferry was not under the control of the clergy and it is said that large quantities of 'poteen' from a local shebeen had been consumed by the Protestant boatmen to celebrate the Orange 'Twelfth'. Being a Sunday, a large number of local residents came to be ferried across to Mass with the pilgrims. Ninety-three people in all were packed into an old and leaking row-boat. Within a few yards of their destination the water-logged boat overturned and its occupants were thrown into about eight feet of water. There were only three survivors. Ninety were drowned within sight of the pilgrims standing on the island wharf a few yards away.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century there was an easing off of the persecution and obstruction and the pilgrimage became better organized. This period also marks a lessening of the severity of the pilgrimage. What originally was a fast of fifteen days had been reduced to six days. In 1825 this was further reduced to three days, but the pilgrim still had the option of doing a six- or nine-day fast. A chapel was built in 1763 and a church in 1789. Both of these were later pulled down and new churches erected in their places. Accommodation for pilgrims and priests was also erected.

The pilgrimage continued to flourish. New hostels had to be erected to accommodate the pilgrims. The minute little island is now completely covered with buildings many of which are built on piles over the water. In 1926 work was commenced on the present basilica which rests on one hundred and twenty-three pillars of re-inforced concrete. It has seating accommodation for nineteen hundred pilgrims and is a unique example of the Hiberno-Romanesque style.

#### PENITENTIAL BEDS

The island is open to pilgrims for ten weeks each year and in that period an average of thirty thousand people do the three-day

pilgrimage. The pilgrim must arrive, fasting, before three o'clock in the first day. Indeed, many people from surrounding districts walk barefooted over long distances as their fathers and their fathers' fathers did before them. On reaching the island the pilgrim is shown to a modern dormitory, where he removes his shoes and socks. He does not use these again until he is leaving the island on the third day.

He has three stations to perform on the first day. The requisite number of rosaries are said walking on bare feet mainly around six penitential beds of sharp uneven stones. These beds, as they are called, are really the remains of the foundations of beehive dormitories. In the centre of each ring of stones is a cross. The roughness of these beds has to be experienced to be believed. The beds are on a slope and the stones are so crazily set that it would be a feat of balance to walk over them even on shod feet. The jagged rocks eat into the bare feet of the pilgrim as he strives to preserve his balance. The beds are so close together that when a large number are doing stations at the same time, as they usually are, the cramped space makes all movement difficult. When the pilgrim selects what he thinks is a not-too-sharp stone on which to step, a brush against another pilgrim can have painful results. Or maybe, when he is kneeling lightly on a particularly sharp stone and striving to keep his weight off it, an old person leans heavily on his shoulders. When it is raining, as it usually is, the pilgrim's misery is complete.

#### THE VIGIL

When he has completed his first station the pilgrim may have his first meal since midnight the night before and his only meal for that day. The meal consists of black tea and dry bread. He may take as much as he likes of this at one sitting. Poor though the meal is, the hot tea revives him and he then completes two further stations.

There is no sleep for the pilgrim on his first night on the island. This is 'Vigil' night. He spends it mostly in the basilica in organized prayer and religious exercises. When not in the basilica he must remain out of doors. The long night wears on slowly. His eyelids are weighted as he intones the repetitive prayers. He cannot remain long in any one posture. He must not sleep on any account and he must awaken any other person who might be

momentarily overcome. Hour follows weary hour, but when morning comes there is no rest for him.

#### HUNGER AND SLEEPINESS

The second day is really the worst of all. There are no religious duties or stations after he has had Mass and Communion in the morning. His penance on this day is to keep awake. Until 9.30 p.m. he must manage to keep his eyes open when every instinct commands him to lie down and surrender. Groups of pilgrims sit or walk together. They laugh and yarn. It is fatal to remain alone. The meal of black tea and bread is looked forward to, but is far from satisfying. The hunger and the sleepiness combined makes him extraordinarily miserable. After the Stations of the Cross at nine o'clock he is given access to the dormitory. He washes his feet and the hard bed seems like down to his tortured body. He is asleep in a second and he has the soundest night's sleep in his life.

Next morning he must do two further stations. Although the night's sleep has done him good, his feet are now particularly tender and these stations are usually the worst. When he has completed them he may put on his shoes. The boat leaves at 11.30. Even though he has left the island, he must not eat until midnight of the third night. He may, if he wishes, partake of lemonade and water-biscuits. At midnight his pilgrimage is completed and he may—and usually does—gorge himself to his heart's content.

A pilgrimage to Lough Derg is an extraordinarily satisfying experience, both spiritually and physically. The pilgrim has had three days' peace and quiet in which to think things over undisturbed by the distractions of his everyday life. He has mortified the flesh and conquered its cravings. He experiences a peculiar elation. This is nothing new. It has been experienced by the pilgrims to this island for the past fifteen hundred years.

JOSEPH O'SULLIVAN

## POINT OF VIEW

## 'THE IMITATION' DRAWS A CONVERT

IT is perhaps presumptuous to feel urged to defend *The Imitation of Christ*, the most widely read devotional book, next to the Bible, in Christian history; and one which has continued to meet people's needs through the last five hundred years. However, there has been a tendency lately to criticize *The Imitation* for what it does not contain; it is not liturgically orientated, or theologically reasoned; it does not stress the social message of the Gospel. But it does have so much truth to offer about the individual Christian's relationship to Christ that it should not be overlooked by today's enthusiasts for liturgical worship and the lay apostolate. The present writer's contention is that *The Imitation draws* a person towards the fullness of the Church.

For several years before coming to the Church *The Imitation* was part of my daily reading—all of it except Book IV on the Sacrament of the Altar. With a Presbyterian background I was too prejudiced about sacraments to look into that. Eventually I did read it and this book became the one which I cared for most. It drew me toward the Sacrament of Communion until a great longing grew up in me—a longing for a living experience quite other than any known by me before. Reverence for Communion in a Protestant Church I had had, and inspiration from it, but I thought of it as a link with a historical Christ of the past rather than an immediate union with the risen Christ, the Eternal Son, and a sharing in his life. Unconsciously I yearned for this. *The Imitation* nourished my mind in preparation.

It was the sixteenth-century Whitford translation, edited by E. J. Klein (Harper and Bros.) that claimed my attention. In England in Whitford's time receiving Communion was called 'being houselled', that is taking the Lord into our house. *Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum*—'Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof'—these are the words of the Mass which immediately precede Communion.

Jesus said: 'For whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, he shall dwell in me and I in him.'

The author of *The Imitation* writes, as if addressing Christ, 'Thou wilt give me this heavenly meat and this angel's food which is plainly none other but thyself, that art the living bread that descendest from heaven and givest life to the world. It is a marvellous thing, worthy to be believed and far above the understanding of man, that thou, Lord, who art God and very man, art wholly contained under a little likeness of bread and wine. O my soul, be thou merry and glad for so noble a gift and so singular a comfort—for as oft as thou takest the body of Christ, so oft thou workest the work of thy redemption and art made part-taker of all the merits of Christ'.

With its innumerable quotations from the Bible, *The Imitation* can form a link between the Bible and the Mass for the seeking Protestant.

MARGARET GARDNER

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Vermont, U.S.A.



## EXTRACTS

AMONG the reviews of the first months of this year dedicated to the centenary at Lourdes, *La Vie Spirituelle* (February), as we might expect, takes the lead in profundity as well as attractiveness. The major part of the number is devoted to Lourdes, its apparitions and miracles, but the most instructive section is 'Prayer to Mary'. Père M.-F. Moos, O.P., writes of the Psalms of the Lady Office and how and why the Church applies them to our Lady. By what he calls a *mystical literal sense* as distinguished from an historical literal sense, the Church has taken the Gradual Psalms and dedicated them to the Blessed Virgin with whom our prayer ascends to Jahwe. This 'sense', 'thanks to the analogy of faith, bursts forth from the very words by a kind of fullness of meaning intended by God who is the principal author of Scripture'. With regard to these psalms sung by the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem,

we must remember that Jerusalem is primarily the figure of the Church militant. We have to join ourselves to her more every day by the assent of our faith and our love. In the praises which are offered to her, Jerusalem in a particular way represents Mary, 'the

Church made woman', more powerful and more holy in herself alone than all those who form with her the city of God. . . . The inspired text incites us to praise Mary and direct our steps towards her with as much eagerness as the Jews in setting off to hasten to their religious capital.

The author then takes the Gradual Psalms and comments briefly on them in this light.

Père A. Humbert, O.P., then considers 'The Rosary and the Liturgy'—a much-needed treatise at a time when these two are so often set in antithesis against each other.

The liturgy unfolds through the year the mysteries of Christ, which can be divided into three cycles: Epiphany, Paschal and Pentecostal, corresponding fairly closely with the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries of the Rosary. Each liturgical feast presents us with an historical event of Christ's and Mary's life. . . . But the events of Christ's life are not recalled in the liturgy and the Rosary merely as 'souvenirs', as an old missal put it, but they are 'mysteries'—that is to say, sources of light drawn from the historic event, and sources of grace drawn from the uninterrupted saving action of Christ the mediator.

Thus the Rosary, like the liturgy, by its meditation and fervent prayer, can put us in very direct contact with the source of all light, of all grace and of all sanctification, and also with the one who distributes these. And, as with the liturgy, the centre and the summit of its mysteries is the Paschal Mystery.

This theme is taken up by Père H.-D. Béchaux, O.P., in the following article in which he takes the reader step by step through the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary to show that they are 'the unique mystery of Jesus revealed by the Bible and chanted in the liturgy'.

In the Lourdes centenary number of *Doctrine and Life* (February-March) the most notable article comes from Archbishop Finbar Ryan, who compares the messages of Lourdes and Fatima. At Fatima our Lady 'dotted the i's and crossed the t's' of her message at Lourdes. But there is a contrast too.

For the over-confident 'scientific' nineteenth-century world she set up at Lourdes an observation-theatre, so to speak, where Heaven's miraculous interventions in human affairs might be minutely studied. . . .

But twentieth-century prayerlessness called, not for a sharply-focussed centre of heavenward movement, but for a stimulus diffused throughout the world to persons of every estate and environment. . . . Our Lady did not invite people to Fatima as she did to Lourdes. There her call was centripetal, in Fatima it was centrifugal,

but the messages of both Lourdes and Fatima are substantially identical: O my children return, return to my Son.

But *Sursum Corda* (Waverley, New South Wales) for February gives us another approach to our Lady in Fr Ambrose Ryan's 'Austrian Devotion to Mary'. This article is the first of a series and so he begins with the arrival of Captain Pedro Fernandez de Quiros off the New Hebrides in 1606. On Whitsunday

the crews disembarked accompanied by a group of Franciscan Friars and Brothers of St John of God, missionaries for the conversion of the natives. The first action of the Catholic Spaniards was to erect a fort on the shore, within which 'a clean and well-ordered altar was erected'. This was the first church, and was named by the Captain 'Our Lady of Loreto'.

From this 'church' a proclamation was read claiming the new lands in the name of our Lord and the Church and the Catholic King of Spain. But the mixture of the conversion of the infidel with empire building has always produced a dubious paste. This typical piece of history recalls Italy's Abyssinian campaign during which picture postcards were circulated showing our Lady floating in the clouds above the Italian tanks going into action. The empire building of fervent Catholics presents a problem which has no easy solution, but we hope that our Lady will not be often associated with the use of force, since she is now more than ever before the Queen of Peace.



## REVIEWS

OUR LADY OF LOURDES. By Rt Rev. Mgr Joseph Deery. (Browne and Nolan Ltd, Dublin; 18s.)

The number one hundred has a peculiar fascination—whether it be the number of runs scored on the cricket field or the number of years of life of a person or an institution. Cricketers have various ways of proceeding when they reach their century. Some think the time has come when they should now begin to hit out indiscriminately at every ball. Others think that the time has come for a fresh guard to be taken and a new start on the road to a second hundred begun. When the centenary of the foundation of any sort of institution, a school, a club, a parish church, is reached, it might be felt that the time has come for the institution to close down because it has outlived its usefulness. On the other hand, it might be regarded as the time for making a fresh

part and re-stating its original aims and ideals. This year the centenary of the Apparitions of our Lady at Lourdes has been reached and is being celebrated all over the world. Many books have appeared on the subject, and the one under review is one which will do much to forward the second of the alternative attitudes that have been suggested above.

Mgr Deery in writing this book intended it primarily for those who will be unable to visit the famous shrine, although pilgrims themselves will find it very useful, and much more readable than most guide-books, to take with them and to read again and again on their return. Having visited the shrine every year for the past thirty years, the author has caught the spirit of Lourdes and brings it out clearly in the book. In giving us a brief history of the town of Lourdes and the surrounding countryside he prepares us admirably for what is to follow. He tells again the story—and it cannot be told too often—of Bernadette, of her family and childhood, of the apparitions, of her later life and sufferings, and puts them all into their proper perspective: Bernadette 'was not canonized because she was favoured with the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin, nor even because she participated actively in the foundation of the vast power-house which Lourdes has become. The reason for her canonization was that she had lived a life of heroic sanctity, based on the instruction and example she had received at Massabielle' (p. 65).

In this one book the author treats of all the many aspects there are of Lourdes: he gives interesting accounts of the buildings at Lourdes, including the new Church of S. Pius X which is to be opened at Easter, of the work for the sick and the organization of the Medical Bureau and International Medical Organization; he gives us details of some of the many miraculous cures obtained at the shrine; and he outlines the development of the ceremonies as they have grown up in answer to our Lady's request that the faithful should come in procession. In a final section, 'The Significance of Lourdes'—which is specially noted by the Archbishop of Dublin in his foreword—the message of Lourdes is concisely and simply put before us; 'the necessity for penitential prayer is, accordingly, the essence of the message of Lourdes' (p. 248).

It is fortunate that the distressing dust-cover is removable from this excellent book.

MICHAEL PLATTS, O.P.

THE LIVING GOD AND THE ROSARY OF OUR LADY. By Romano Guardini. (Longmans; 9s. 6d.)

The addresses contained in *The Living God* 'were not written in the study but arose from the depth and joy of that relationship which

exists between the preacher and the congregation that confides in him'. These are the opening words of the introduction. Mgr Guardini goes on to say that as a result his words appearing in print may very well lose some of their vital quality. I think that this is true, and that they inevitably do. To those who know Mgr Guardini well it may well appear obvious that it really is to them that he is talking, and they may feel that relationship truly present. Those who have read much of his writings will feel that they are being addressed by a familiar friend. Few, I fear, however, will feel that it is really to them or with them that he is speaking—this despite a beautiful freeness of manner and naturalness of expression.

The author does not set out to prove anything, but rather to leave behind an impression, one which should give the deep realization that God is not a history-book autocrat demanding a particular code of behaviour, but a living and loving God. He does this in a dozen addresses not following on one from another, but rather encircling and pervading his subject. With the reservation made above, he has done this very beautifully. The translation is not consistently satisfactory. Words are used sometimes in a way that is not really possible in English. The word 'Providence' is a striking example. Apart from this blemish, the translation is pleasant and easy.

In *The Rosary of Our Lady* the author would wish to lead his reader into 'a world filled with tranquil life, a world in which he would meet, serene and benevolent, the holy images of faith'. This, he admits, is beyond his power; 'so I have substituted my thoughts'. His thoughts are indeed filled with tranquil life, and may be able to help some of the less tranquil among his readers in their approach to this great prayer. Objectively, however, this section of this book is slight; but at any rate it helps bring up the number of pages to a publishable figure.

G.R.H.

THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD: Papal Documents from Pius X to Pius XII. (Gill and Son, Dublin; 35s.)

*Notre Sacerdoce* is a collection, in two volumes, of the teaching of the popes of the present century on the priesthood—the second volume being devoted entirely to Pius XII. Its compiler is Monsignor Pierre Veuillot, an official of the Vatican Secretariate of State, and Archbishop Montini, who at that time was in Rome, wrote a preface for it.

The collection of papal documents has been put into English by three Maynooth professors (Rev. John A. O'Flynn, in collaboration with Rev. P. Birch and Very Rev. G. Canon Mitchell) and published in one volume by Messrs Gill under the title of *The Catholic Priesthood*. One effect of the fact of the French being in two volumes is that the

numbering of the pages and paragraphs in the English version begins again at 1 where the second volume of the French begins. It might perhaps have been better not to have done this, but it cannot be denied that *The Catholic Priesthood* has been most carefully edited and arranged so that its price is quite reasonable for a book of nearly seven hundred pages.

One of the great merits of this book is that it has been excellently indexed, as all books of this kind should be. Besides a Scripture index, an index to canons of the Code and a chronological index of Pontifical documents (whether contained in the body of the text, quoted in the text or in the notes, or merely referred to), there is a most useful analytical index of more than forty pages. This last index adds greatly to the value of the book and will help readers to derive much more profit than they otherwise would from the documents quoted.

The analytical index is well balanced by Mgr Veuillot's introduction. This not only states the purpose of the book and the limits which the compiler set himself but also gives a brief synthesis of the teaching to be found in the documents. This synthesis is in the form of a summary of the teaching of individual Popes, with references to the documents, and an indication of what is the main characteristic of the teaching of each Pope. Many a reader will welcome this introduction as they will the thoughtful preface of Archbishop Montini.

'It was felt, however', says the compiler, 'that the primary task was not to undertake analysis or comment; one should not come between the reader and the words of the Vicar of Christ' (p. xxii). In accordance with this, the main part of the book gives without comment what the Popes of the twentieth century have said to men of the twentieth century about the priesthood. The papal teaching is presented in an excellent translation, in numbered paragraphs and with sufficient headings and sub-headings. Nothing interferes with the text—all extraneous comment and matter being consigned to the foot-notes. These notes are a mine of information and should be a great help to the student.

'We have been surprised', said Mgr Veuillot, 'by the abundance of the papal documents on the priesthood.' And anyone looking casually through this book will also be surprised, especially if he realizes that many quotations have been omitted because they were outside the scope of the book. The main traditional teaching of the Church on the nature, qualities and mission of the priesthood is contained here together with very many new applications of the essential teaching to the changed ways of life of the present age and to its new and complex problems. That the priesthood is one of the main preoccupations of the papacy of the present time is to be seen not only from the number of times that the Popes talk or write about the priesthood but also

from the many different occasions they use for that purpose. Thus in 1947, the year of the *Mediator Dei*, Pius XII had something to say about the priesthood in an exhortation to the clergy on the occasion of the canonization of St Joseph Cafasso and again in a discourse for the canonization of St Louis-Marie Grignon as well as in a radio message to the Eucharistic Congress at Nantes. Again, in 1951, the discourse to the parish priests and Lenten preachers of Rome, the Encyclical *Evangelii praecones*, discourses to the Carmelite Order and to the first world congress of the lay apostolate have valuable teaching on the priesthood. In season and out of season, the modern Popes have explained what the priesthood is and exhorted priests, those who wish to be priests and those who choose and train the priests to be, to live up to this teaching.

Canon Masure's *The Diocesan Priest*, recently reviewed in THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, is, of its nature, a book written about the priesthood from one angle (though it also contains much of universal application). Other books of recent years have dealt with the same subject in a more universal way, but without the authority that inevitably belongs to any written or spoken statement of the Popes. Here, in *The Catholic Priesthood*, is to be found the loving care and watchfulness of successive Vicars of Christ for the priests under their charge. It is to be found, thanks to the compiler and translators, in a most manageable form and it is to be hoped that the book is given the welcome and the study that it deserves.

J. CONNELLY

FISHERS OF MEN. By Maxence van der Meersch. (Geoffrey Chapman; ss. 6d.)

*Fishers of Men* has now been produced in a cheap edition. It is a novel about the struggling establishment of the Jocist movement as seen through the eyes of Peter Mardyck, a young worker in Roubeaux in the north of France, near the Belgian border.

It is described as a tribute to the Young Christian Worker movement. From the last chapter it appears also that the hero is to be seen almost as an exemplar to the movement, an ideal figure.

The novel describes graphically the typical industrial malaise which existed before World War II. It describes well the sufferings and trials of a young worker trying to be guided by Christ and set in the middle of gross physical industrial dirt and gross moral industrial depravity. The evils of employers and workers, and the ineffectiveness of a moribund Christianity in face of them, are well portrayed. They parallel to a great extent the conditions in England and the conditions which explain, as a background, much of modern industrial strife. They are the things which are looked back to and which are salient even to the minds of workers who are too young to have experienced

em. They are the type of experiences handed down to us; the things the worker culturally remembers. They are not entirely gone, as can be seen, for instance, in personal experiences found sometimes in *New Life*, the review of the Y.C.W.

The inevitable loneliness of the Christian leader in such a context, the perplexity involved in judging what is right in a criss-cross of conflicting forces of employers, unions, political forces, etc., when alliance with any one group is liable to be wrong or wrongly interpreted, is well portrayed.

What, though, of young Peter Mardyck in such conditions? In the first part of the novel he is ready to admit his faults and incapacities in the face of such immense difficulties. But his Christian perception of the situation grows: he becomes good. We can be very happy that he has become good, but could we not have been left to guess it for ourselves from the portrayal of his character without him telling us so himself? It is true that he attributes his goodness to Christ. In the last chapter we are told that his Christian ideals have given him strength and made a man of him. He is not hardened, seared or narrowed. Could he have told us this so explicitly? All he expects from life is struggles, betrayal, loneliness, hypocrisy, etc. Surely there are other aspects to his life, too: he is a happily married man.

The edificational and anagogical elements seem to be too bluntly put into the mouth of the main character. Perhaps it is necessary for the ideal to be so sharply put for youth to understand it. The founder of Scouting seemed to find it necessary to make a sharp distinction between his characters: the boy who smoked and the boy who did not smoke, etc.

Nevertheless, Peter Mardyck's ideals are true ideals and ones which must be captured. They were applicable in the thirties and they are applicable today. Any criticism of one aspect of the book cannot obscure the fact that what the back cover says is true. This is a story told with realism and intensity: it involves the reader in the struggle for justice and humanity. It is a moving and very readable book.

F.J.F.

WEDDING SERMONS. By M. A. Couturier, O.P. (Blackfriars; 5s. 6d.)  
Originally published in French by Les Editions du Cerf under the title *Discours de Mariage*, this book looks expensive at first glance—sixty pages for 5s. 6d., and only paper covers—but it is a treasure and worth any amount of money. Père Couturier speaks to ten couples, real ones, and speaks from his head as well as his heart. In a variety of ways he tells them much the same thing, essentially, each time. It is a thing worth saying—that love is the only worth-while reality and that love's blindness is a blinding light. He does not use those exact words,

but that is the drift and it is interesting to see how variously he says it. It is applicable, after all, to more occasions than weddings. He is not sentimental. He both appreciates human love and helps his audiences of two to see how much more lovely is the love of God.

THE INSIGHT OF THE CURÉ D'ARS. By the Abbé Francis Trochu. (Burns and Oates; 9s. 6d.)

The word 'insight' here means more than the power of seeing between the lines, of inspired guessing, of clairvoyance. It is light from heaven, one of the proofs of the Curé's sanctity. There are fifty examples, in the form of true stories, of his supernatural knowledge of what was going on in other people's minds and hearts and souls, and some of the facts relate to past and future events which he could not have known by natural means. Told in simple, rather Victorian English (a translation of course), they retain the atmosphere of the time. But this is a time-defying book of charming true stories about wonderful but homely incidents. It is calculated to help any sincere soul but perhaps especially those who are tempted to intellectual pride. G. M. CORR, O.S.M.

INSIDE THE ARK AND OTHER STORIES. By Caryll Houselander. (Sheed and Ward; 8s. 6d.)

This is a book of what might be called 'holy fairy-tales'. They all belong to the wishes-come-true category, but the power is not that of magic and fairies, but of grace and the angels. A delightful book for the Catholic child of seven to nine years old, for without having the flavour of the 'moral tale for the young', each story makes some very valuable point. Each is told with gaiety and humour, and yet with an acceptance of supernatural intervention which is child-like in its perfect simplicity.

ROSEMARY HEDDON

COMPLINE ACCORDING TO THE DOMINICAN RITE IN LATIN AND ENGLISH. (Blackfriars; 5s.)

Those who have the good fortune to be able to attend Compline in Dominican churches will welcome the re-publication of this book, whilst others may welcome, for private use, this complete text of the changing psalms and hymns of the Church's official night-prayers. The print is clear and pleasant to read, with the Latin text on one page, and the English translation facing it.

ROSEMARY HEDDON

THE MAKING OF CHURCH VESTMENTS. By Graham Jenkins. (Challoner; 4s. 6d.)

At first sight it would seem almost impossible that within the thirty-two pages of this small book so much could be compressed. But the author has found space to give not only clear, concise, and eminently practical instructions on the making of simple vestments,

it also to provide a short account of their historical development. There are some helpful diagrams, and several excellent photographs illustrating the text.

Even those whose knowledge of sewing is comparatively slight could feel encouraged by this book to attempt to make something for their church, whilst those who wish to go more deeply into the subject will find a considerable bibliography appended, though it is fortunate that so many of the books listed are out of print.

ROSEMARY HEDDON

GOSPEL MEDITATIONS. By Alfred O'Rahilly. (Browne and Nolan; 18s.) This book is only worth reviewing here because of its foreword. This is quoted extensively on the dust-jacket, and in such a place could well be a snare, as it is certainly a delusion, though by no less person than Father Martin D'Arcy. The great scholarship of the author is emphasized, the high quality of his studies in this field are pointed out, he is compared to Lagrange and Guardini. His historical and exegetical scholarship, we are told, makes the Gospel text speak for us. These qualities I would not deny to Professor O'Rahilly, but they do not appear in this book. In the author's own words from the preface, 'This unpretentious volume has no claim to scholarship'. It is the foreword that is pretentious. The hundred incidents dealt with are treated gently and simply. Thoughts for meditation are not forced on the reader, but are offered him for his attention. These stories from the Gospels are put in a popular idiom; they are just saved from vulgarity by the author's good taste. It is very doubtful whether the way of offering historical background has any value at all. Will it be of any help whatever to the reader for whom this book is intended to be told that Anna (called 'a devout old lady'), had lived through such events as the death of Alexander Jannaeus, of Queen Alexandra, the advent of Herod, etc.? Do not the simple words of the Gospel itself give a far stronger impression of what she must have been? The 'scholarship' shoved in in this way seems very much a case of blinding with science. In places points are brought out very clearly, in others they are forced out rather falsely. It is not at all a bad book, but it is also not at all what Fr D'Arcy would lead us to believe. G.R.H.



## NOTICES

GREAT many books and pamphlets have appeared this year to celebrate the centenary of Lourdes. We list some of them here with comments on their usefulness to our readers.

*Queen of the Universe* (Grail Publications, St Meinrad, Indiana; \$4.00) is the second volume of the Marian Library series of anthologies. It is concerned with the Assumption and Queenship of Mary and includes Papal pronouncements, theological research and popular treatment. Most of the material is well chosen considering the vast amount of literature to be drawn upon.

*This Place Called Lourdes*, by Sister Maureen Flynn, O.P. (Burns & Oates; 15s.), is a devout but reasonably sober account of the place, the miracles, the pilgrimages and the religious atmosphere of Lourdes. The section on the Miracles is much the largest and is written with considerable technical knowledge. There is a short chapter on 'The Uncured' which puts the miracles in their right perspective. Certainly a useful book, and one which might well be read in preparation for a first visit to Lourdes.

A smaller work of the same character in pamphlet form is *The Spirit of Lourdes*, by Rev. J. A. Shields, M.A., D.C.L. (M. H. Gill and Son, Dublin; 3s. 6d.) The author has also written a guide to Lourdes. Here he outlines its story and dwells on its spiritual significance. *The Rose of Lourdes* (M. H. Gill and Son, Dublin; 4s.) is the story of Lourdes in ballad form. 'It is in verse, but not verse of the kind that repels the average reader', says the blurb. If you consider yourself an average reader you may be prepared to take the risk and you may find it congenial; on the other hand you may think, as we do, that what might have been made a simple and attractive ballad has been ruined by its archness and conventional Victorian ballad language.

Messrs Burns and Oates are publishing a series of *Universe Books* in shiny paper-back form at 2s. 6d.; they are, I think, all reprints of already well known works and are well produced and very good value. Among them are the following: *Bernadette of Lourdes*, first published in 1941 under the title *The Sublime Shepherdess*, by Frances Parkinson Keyes. This is another book about Lourdes which will be welcome to many. Other titles in this series which recommend themselves are: *The Gospels* and *The Letters of St Paul*, translated with Introductions by Ronald Knox. Thomas Merton's well-known *Seeds of Contemplation* and *Saints and Ourselves*, edited by Fr Philip Caraman, S.J. I mention only one out of the thirteen biographies of Saints in this collection, that of Maria Goretti, by Dr E. B. Strauss. Many of us are repelled by the very idea of this apparently rather precocious child-saint. If you feel like that you ought to spend half-a-crown and buy this book, if only to read Dr Strauss' essay and revise your view. You will, however, find the other essays also worth while.